

障がい者武道への招待

from Japan

International
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An invitation to Budo for the disabled

Is Budo good for the disabled?

Is Budo for the disabled good for Budo?

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Let's practice Budo together

Budo is a term that describes traditional Japanese martial arts such as karate, judo, kendo, and aikido.

Most people believe that people with disabilities can practice Budo, but also think instructors are obligated to give disabled students special attention and treatment in the dojo and in competitions. However, this should not be thought of as being beneficial only for the student. It can be for the instructor, too. For example, through practicing with the disabled, instructors gain a greater understanding of the original intention of Budo techniques.

Budo has an open system for the disabled

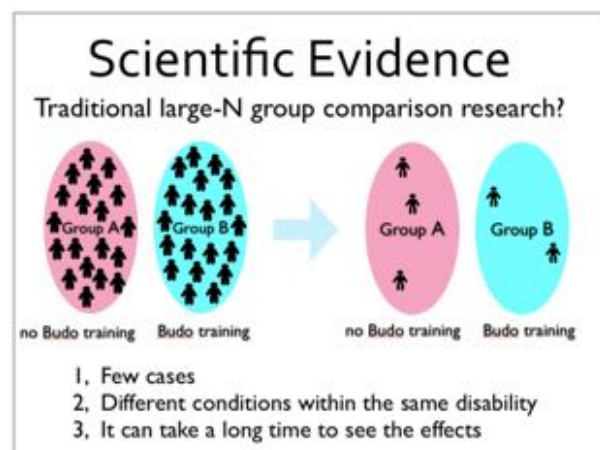
The way in which the body is moved in Budo stems from the battlefield techniques of ancient Japan. There were no referees to say "Stop!" and call a halt to the conflict, so samurai had to continue fighting even if they had a disability such as an eye or arm injury. This means that since its inception, Budo has been open to people with disabilities.

"Budo for the disabled" is an important topic in the martial arts. Different training methods in Budo can be shared between people with disabilities and those without. Training methods for the mentally disabled, for example, are also suitable for teaching beginners or elderly practitioners. Budo practitioners as a whole can gain a lot from "Budo for the disabled".

Is Budo good for people with disabilities?

I have collected many personal testimonies from disabled practitioners regarding the rehabilitative benefits of practicing Budo. Most disabled practitioners and their families, however, require some type of scientific evidence of its benefits before starting Budo.

As the father of a mentally disabled daughter, I understand their misgivings. Families of the disabled have a history of trying many different methods without success, so they habitually hold doubts as to whether something can be of benefit or not. Comments such as, "This is a special case", "Maybe this person has a special talent", or "These cases are not suited to my child" are quite common. I needed to acquire some scientific evidence to help alleviate their doubts



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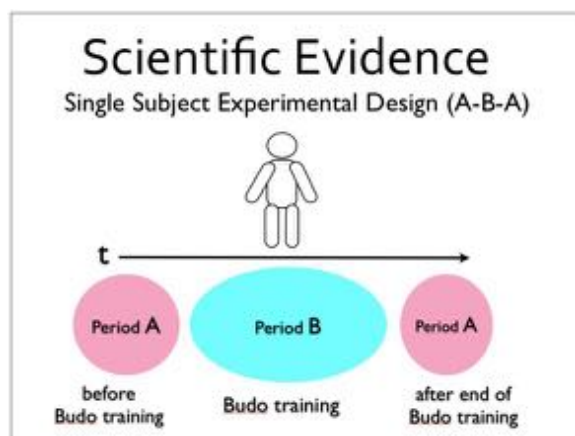
I initially envisioned a study which compared two large groups of disabled people: those who practiced Budo, and those who did not. Unfortunately, this experiment was never realized due to three research problems:

1. The number of disabled people willing to participate in a scientific study of Budo are very few.
2. There is a large range of symptoms and conditions within the same disability. For instance, there are many different manifestations of cerebral palsy (wheelchair users, stick users and people who can walk independently), all of which are put within the same category. This makes designing large studies which require a certain degree of homogeneity, practically impossible.
3. It can take a very long time to see the results of rehabilitation. For example, it took the student in the picture six years to learn how to raise his left arm. I gave up the traditional large - N group comparison type of research and decided to carry out a single case study using a single-subject experimental design (SSED) test. It features an A-B-A experimental structure to test Budo-based rehabilitation.



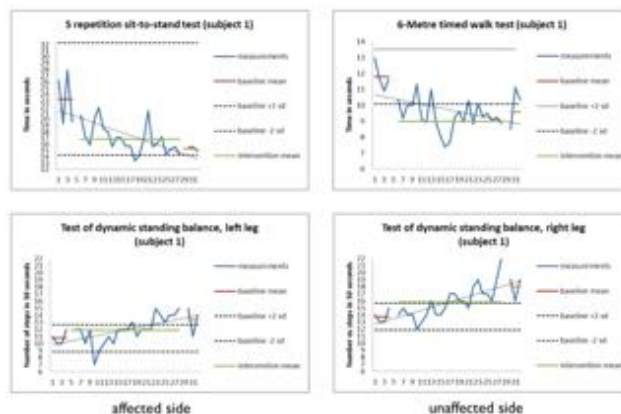
- Period A: Baseline measurements were taken two weeks before Budo training.
- Period B: During Budo training, data was taken twice a week.
- Period A: Final measurements were taken one month after the end of budo training.

We were able compare data before and after Budo training through this experiment.



The experiment included six participants who had suffered strokes. The tests included four kinds of motor test, a few self-reported tests, and interviews. The data we obtained as scientific evidence clearly showed that

Budo rehabilitation effectively delivered general quantitative improvements. Not only could the patients perform daily life tasks better as a result of Budo rehabilitation, they also showed less fear, more independence, and a healthier self-image. The interviews suggest that Budo-based rehabilitation is qualitatively different from other forms of rehabilitation.

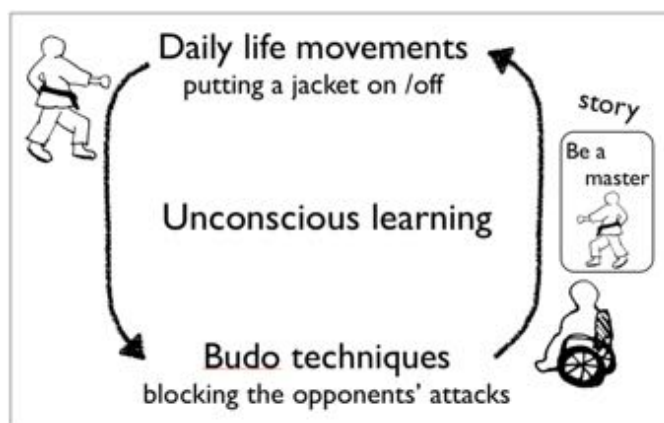


“Budo practice for post-stroke patients-reflections on historical and scientific issues” Kantaro Matsui, Agneta Larsson, Yoshimi Yamahira, Annika Näslund http://proceedings.archbudo.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/21_ArchBudoConfProc.pdf.

Why is Budo good for the disabled?

Unconscious learning

In the movie *The Karate Kid* (1984), Master Miyagi makes the boy repeat movements from daily life such as washing a car or painting a wall. In the 2010 remake with Jackie Chan, this was represented by taking a jacket on and off every day. The boy becomes bored with the routine, but the master shows him that some movements in daily life share commonality with techniques in the martial arts. This is an example of acquiring skills without realizing it, and the movie shows how the boy was unconsciously able to acquire skills through repetition of mundane movements. In Budo for the disabled, it is the other way around. People with disabilities are unconsciously able to perform mundane activities such as putting on or taking off a jacket by themselves.



Story

The movements used in Budo are not special in terms of physiotherapy. Unlike physiotherapy, however, Budo practice has a “story”: “By practicing Budo, I am on the way to becoming a samurai, a karate master...” and soon. This story helps students to stay motivated. It contextualizes rehabilitation in a powerful way, and the story challenges the disabled to push themselves in ways they did not think possible.

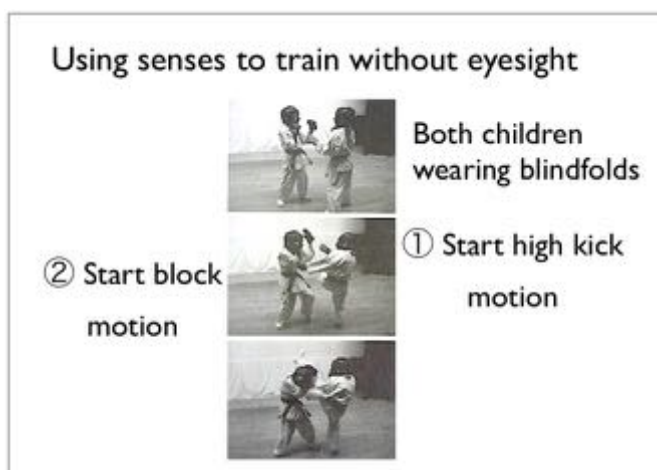
Rehabilitation methods utilized by physiotherapists do not have such an empowering “story”, so it quickly becomes boring. For this reason, I hypothesize that the dojo protocol of “*seiza - mokusō - rei*” (sit down, meditate, bow) at the beginning and end of practice is very important as components of the story.

Is Budo for the disabled good for Budo?

People with disabilities give us new training opportunities

Why should a dojo accept mentally disabled people if they cannot follow the basic rules of behaviour in a dojo? For instance, people with hyperkinesia move and talk while other students in the dojo are meditating. This, however, provides an opportunity for other students in the dojo to try focusing in noisy surroundings. According to my experience, dojo students can adjust to this kind of distraction in a day.

Able-bodied people believe that a blind person cannot practice *kumite* (sparring) in karate, but there is a blind track and field Paralympian who studies Kyokushin Karate style *kumite*. I conveyed this to the head instructor of a karate dojo, and he consequently developed a new type of sensory training. The boys in his dojo now practice karate while wearing blindfolds.



The boy on the right starts to attack with a high-kick motion. The boy on the left, using his hearing, senses that his opponent will attack him with a high-kick so assumes a blocking position. Because we tend to rely mostly on visual cues, we are easily fooled by feints made by our opponents. This type of training makes the students aware of other senses that they can use.

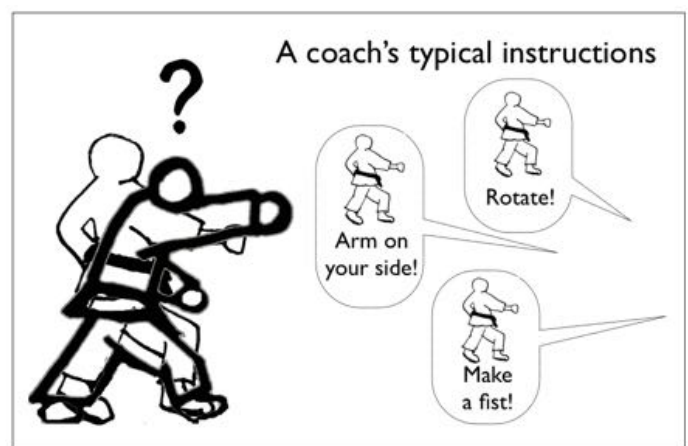
People with disabilities give us new coaching methods

It is difficult for beginners to punch (*tsuki*) while rotating the hands. This action is especially difficult for the intellectually impaired. In a specialized school for the disabled in Japan, however, there is a teacher who was successful in teaching this movement to intellectually impaired students in a total of 30 minutes. His coaching method is very simple.



“Hold both arms in front, make fists with the right hand facing up and the left down. Switch! Right fist facing down, left fist facing up. Switch. Switch. Switch. Switch. Now swing your upper body! Switch. Switch. Switch.”

Through this method of instruction, everybody learned to punch naturally while rotating the arms.



When students with intellectual impairment receive more than two instructions, they become confused and cannot perform all the tasks. This method uses only one instruction: “Switch”, and is also very efficacious for teaching beginners and elderly practitioners.

The disabled make us act as true martial artists

A “true” martial artist is concerned not only with keeping the traditions and philosophy of his or her discipline intact, they also want to develop new techniques. Able-bodied people often see the need to give leverage to the disabled because of their mental or physical weaknesses, but there are many strong martial artists with disabilities.

For example, a one-armed student at the International Budo University became a kendo champion. I asked him, “How can you be so strong without a right arm?” He pointed out three reasons:

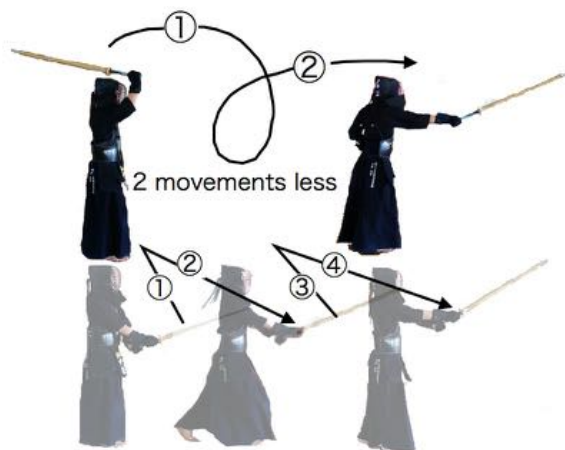
1. Nobody can strike his *kote* (right wrist).

2. He can control his *shinai* (bamboo sword) with one arm in a high position, making his reach 30cm longer than that of an average person who uses both arms.



My question is, “Could you wait for him?”, or “Could you keep your focus the entire time?”

3. To strike a “*kote-men*” (right wrist followed by head) combination attack, an able-bodied practitioner swings the *shinai* 4 times (1-2-3-4), but he needs to swing it only twice (1-2). His rhythm is different by 2 beats.



I would ask the reader, “Would you be able to wait for him?” “Would you be able to keep focus the entire time?” I certainly could not. I edited this video to make it shorter for my presentation. I then realized that I am not a good Budo coach. This dojo could wait for 2 minutes 56 seconds, so why can’t we wait for only 3 minutes? The dojo succeeded in helping him build up his self-confidence through waiting for him to complete his routine.

Closing remarks

I believe that there is a beneficial relationship between the disabled and Budo because “Budo for the disabled” is not only for the disabled, but for Budo as a whole.

It was recommended to me that I use the term “Para-Budo” instead of “Budo for the disabled”, but this was unacceptable to me. There should not be a label such as “Para-Budo” only for disabled practitioners because Budo has been for everyone since its beginnings. I believe that this understanding and attitude is important.

If I were to change the title of this pamphlet, I would call it “An invitation to Budo for everyone”, instead of “An invitation to Budo for the disabled”. Hopefully this will become the standard mode of thinking in the future.

The disabled encourage us to be innovative coaches

There is a video on YouTube (Shiwari by wheelchair user) of a karate performance by a person with cerebral palsy who uses an electric wheelchair. He tries to break a wooden board with a punch (tsuki).

Why would I recommend such a video? Because I want to show that this person can achieve this despite his disability? Absolutely not!

An invitation to Budo for the disabled

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The Japanese government is committed to creating our future through the power of sport with more than 10 million people of over 100 countries from 2014 until 2020. With the Sport for Tomorrow programme, Japan aims to be involved in the promotion of sporting values, including assistance to developing countries; train future sport leaders at the new international sport academy; and further protect and promote the values of sport by extending anti-doping initiatives globally.

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